

VZCZCXR05317
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #1933/01 3401331
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 061331Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9466
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001933

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL KPKO SOCI AU UNSC SU
SUBJECT: UNMIS SAYS GUEHENNO "NOT LYING" IN NOV 27 BRIEFING TO UNSC

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a December 5 meeting with FieldOff, Head of Office in El Fasher for the United Nation Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) asserted that Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guhenno "was not lying" in his November 27 briefing to the UN Security Council (UNSC) about impediments imposed by the Government of Sudan to the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) deployment. At the same time, however, the UNMIS chief said that Guhenno had not told the whole story and that even if GoS obstacles were removed, challenges to UNAMID deployment would remain. FieldOff will talk separately on December 6 with the UNAMID Chief of Integrated Support Services and a representative of the UN Air Safety Office in a further attempt to reconcile DPKO allegations and the reality on the ground regarding UNAMID deployment. END SUMMARY.

GUHENNO'S HALF-TRUTHS

¶12. (SBU) In a December 5 meeting with FieldOff, UNMIS Head of Office in El Fasher commented on U/SYG Guhenno's November 27 remarks to the UNSC on progress in Darfur peacekeeping efforts, remarks which have drawn ire from the GoS, which considers them to be unjustly accusatory and one-sided. The UNMIS Chief said that "Guhenno was not lying, but he was not telling the whole truth, either," in his statement, elaborating that while GoS obstruction does in fact exist, it will not in and of itself be the reason for the problems plaguing UNAMID. First, he acknowledges that it is true that the GoS had not yet approved the October 2 list of UNAMID troop contributing countries (TCCs), which is raising questions about the composition of the force. However, the UNMIS chief notes that even if the GoS were to sign off unequivocally on the force's composition, "it would not mean that 26,000 troops would arrive in Darfur tomorrow."

¶13. (SBU) Second, the UNMIS head pointed out that the GoS is indeed playing legal games with the UN to hamper progress in finalizing the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for UNAMID. Again, as with the TCC list, the UNMIS chief did not see where an expeditiously finalized SOFA free would in fact translate into immediate and effective UNAMID deployment. The UNMIS head noted that the GoS is imposing similar obstacles to delivery of communications equipment (VSATs have been held in El Fasher Airport for well over one month) and to permission for night flights [NOTE: In a separate meeting with FieldOff and PolOff, UNAMID Chief of Staff BG Patrick Davidson-Houston noted that UN helicopters did not need a special airstrip to accommodate night landings and could do so without GoS authorization. END NOTE] but added that neither prohibition, if lifted, would mean smooth sailing for UNAMID in the immediate term.

¶14. (SBU) What the UNMIS chief saw as the most disturbing obstacle thrown in UNAMID's path was what he considered the GoS' deliberate blocking of civil society members and IDPs from participating in Sirte Talks by preventing them from obtaining travel permits and visas. No matter how long the GoS stalled on the TCC list or how many legal hurdles it could concoct for the SOFA, nothing could compare to the damage done to the peace process, which the UNMIS

head saw as the only real hope for Darfur and to which the peacekeeping operation would ultimately be secondary.

15. (SBU) The UNMIS head did not dismiss the influence of other actors in the Darfur drama. On the political side, he singled out Libya as a self-interested spoiler and said the UN and AU needed to think more carefully before choosing a venue for subsequent rounds. He then talked about TCC self-interest and noted the difficulty the UN faced in working with the AU on this operation, a reality that Guhenno did not include in his statement to the Council but that nevertheless was as much of a hindrance to operations as any GoS obstacle.

TIMING RIGHT FOR DPKO MESSAGE

16. (SBU) Despite what he considered its shortcomings, the UNMIS head regards Guhenno's statement as necessary and well-timed. "The international community needs to know what we are facing on the ground," he said. However, what to do with that information was the trick. The UNMIS chief did not see sanctions or ICC indictments as the best way forward in inducing the GoS or "those who stay away from the peace process" to do the right thing. Without offering a definitive plan for proceeding, the UNMIS head simply acknowledged that careful, targeted pressure would be the appropriate follow-up.

17. (SBU) In the immediate term, however, the UNMIS Chief recommends the international community focus its efforts in identifying air assets for UNAMID, which, in his assessment, could make the tangible difference on the ground that IDPs were expecting with regard to camp security and protection. He regretted the UN's lack of foresight in failing to amass its own stock of helicopters and APCs for use in peacekeeping operations, a stock that could have prevented the scramble for assets currently experienced by UNAMID.

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[Note: The UNMIS chief's emphasis on helicopters echoed recent remarks by Force Commander Agwai. END NOTE].

18. (SBU) COMMENT. The UNMIS Chief's views are not necessarily representative of the whole of the UN community with regard to UNAMID deployment. For example, a UNAMID Civil Affairs Officer considers that the hold-up of the VSATs is having direct and potentially devastating effects not only on the mission's short-term operation but on its ability to maintain personnel recruited as well. This discrepancy raises the bigger-picture issue of what the underlying issue raised by Guhenno really is: that UNAMID should focus on addressing individually the GoS' short-term delay tactics or on looking at the effects of the sum of these parts on long-term Darfur stability, especially with regard to the peace negotiations. Planned December 6 conversations with UN Chief of Integrated Support Services and with a rep of the UN Air Safety Office should shed some further light on the picture on the ground. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ